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Outline of Reference Paper On:

SIGNS OF CONFLICT WITHIN THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Certain developments on the Soviet scene since December, 1959 point to the existence of contradictions and cross-currents among the senior Soviet leaders. Viewed individually, these events might seem to lack any connection. But in the aggregate they exhibit a common pattern of confusion, conflicting pressures and internal struggle.

The sudden switch at the Central Committee Plenum last December on agricultural policy, entailing the unexpected jettisoning by Khrushchev of the Kazakhstan Party Secretary, Belyayev; Khrushchev's retreat before the Party Plenum on the issue of material incentives to collective farmers, the downgrading of Kirichenko, the open talk by Soviet military leaders of the difficulties which will accompany the impending Soviet armed forces reductions, the utopian tone of decrees last month by the USSR Supreme Soviet calling for the improvement of medical services and a war on disease (as though they did not really expect to reach their goals in this sphere)—these are some of the developments which appear to support the impression that the price Khrushchev is paying to his Central Committee colleagues for his survival as the sole Party and government chief is his willingness to drop both individuals and policies which his colleagues feel are opposed to their interests.

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No. 18, 1959/60

SIGNS OF CONFLICT WITHIN THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Although they are apparently unconnected with each other, or even mutually contradictory, many events that have occurred in the Soviet Party and governmental hierarchies during the past two months are intimately linked with one another. Taken together, they reflect vividly Khrushchev's present internal policy line and indicate a serious conflict within the Party Central Committee. These events include:

1. The manipulation of the recent statistics concerning the cultivation of the virgin lands.
2. The resistance at the December, 1959, Plenum of the Central Committee to Khrushchev's agricultural policy and to the change of policy on the principle of incentives for members of kolkhozes (collective farms).
3. The swift and sudden substitution in December 1959 of praise for the Party leadership in Kazakhstan for successful management of agriculture with savage criticism of the Kazakhstan authorities for failure in the very same field.
4. The fall of Kirichenko last month and the move to replace senior Party leaders with Party members drawn from the younger generation.
5. The Central Committee's January 10, 1960 resolution on Party propaganda.
6. The resolution of the Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers dated January 20, 1960, on measures to improve medical services.
7. The passing on January 15, 1960 of the law by the USSR Supreme Soviet on the reduction of the country's armed forces.
8. The resolution of the Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, published on January 27, 1960, on measures to improve the quality and increase the output of certain food products.

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The first three of these developments, which are linked with the December, 1959, Plenum of the Party Central Committee, reflect the failure of Khrushchev's agricultural policy and the intensification of a conflict within the Central Committee, while the others represent an attempt to disguise these events and to restore Khrushchev's prestige.

On the eve of the Central Committee Plenum, the Party journal Kommunist, in its last issue (No. 18) for the year 1959, carried an article by N. Anisimov entitled "The Cultivation of the Virgin Lands," which gave the total cultivated area "in regions" of the virgin and fallow lands as 80,700,000 hectares*, or 41.2 per cent of the total area under cultivation in the USSR. Anisimov further stated that the total grain harvest in these areas constituted 41 per cent of the total for the USSR, and that state purchases in these areas amounted to 3.58 per cent of the total for the USSR.

In view of an earlier official statement that the entire area under cultivation in the virgin and fallow lands amounted to not more than 37,000,000 hectares, these figures are doubtful. Anisimov's figures apparently included not only the virgin lands not plowed up until 1954 or later, but also land previously under cultivation in the virgin lands area, that is, the whole of the Kazakh SSR, the Altai and Krasnoyarsk Krai, (territories) the Middle Volga region, etc.

Local Party Chiefs Criticize Khrushchev Policies

During the Central Committee Plenum, Nikolai I. Belyayev, Secretary of the Kazakhstan Party Central Committee and a member of the Presidium of the All-Union Party Central Committee, sharply criticized the principle of increasing the material incentives offered to kolkhoz members, a practice which had resulted in their earning a great deal more than the workers on sovkhozes (state farms). He also attacked the state policy on prices for agricultural produce, under which kolkhozes were receiving nearly twice as much for their produce as sovkhozes. Belyayev revealed that in Kazakhstan during 1958, for example, prices paid to kolkhozes were, 4,213 rubles per 100 kilograms of wool as against 1,821 rubles to sovkhozes: 579 rubles per 100 kilograms of mutton as against 321 rubles to sovkhozes: 139 rubles per 100 kilograms of sunflower seeds as against 60 rubles to sovkhozes, etc. Belyayev declared:

The excessively high prices for state purchases of kolkhoz produce do not encourage the establishment of progressive output norms or progressive methods of labor organization. . . . The national interests demand the rectification of this injustice (Pravda, December 23, 1959).

The speech at the Plenum by First Secretary of the Belorussian Party Central Committee Kiryl Mazurov amounted to a contradiction of Khrushchev. Mazurov openly expressed his doubt as to the reliability of the official figures for cattle raising in Ryazan oblast (region), where state purchases of meat were alleged to have increased by the amazing figure of 200 per cent during 1959--- an achievement which Khrushchev had held up as an example for other oblasts and Soviet Union republics. (Pravda, December 24, 1959). (more)

In addition to this, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR Dmitri S. Polyansky indirectly deprecated Khrushchev's policy of dissolving the machine and tractor stations, a policy which, he said, had been responsible for the fact that the country's agricultural machinery had been unprepared for the sowing and later for the collection of the 1959 harvest.

The resolution finally adopted by the Party Plenum also reflected an unfavorable criticism of Khrushchev's agricultural policy, in that it demanded a revision of the tariff for state purchases of kolkhoz produce which would lead to a reduction in the income of kolkhozniks (collective farm workers). A leading article published in the January, 1960 issue of Kommunist further developed this line of thought, which is opposed to the policy of increasing incentives for kolkhoz members.

All this makes it clear that the December, 1959, Plenum of the Party Central Committee revealed a lack of confidence in the expediency of Khrushchev's agricultural policy, so that Khrushchev was obliged during the Plenum to throw onto Belyayev the blame for the setbacks incurred in the virgin lands.

There is little doubt that the reports published in the Soviet press on the proceedings of this Plenum were appreciably edited. Evidently, definite doubts had been expressed as to the economic expediency of continuing to cultivate the virgin lands: only this can explain Khrushchev's assertion: "In 1954, I advocated beginning the cultivation of the virgin lands: we must not now refuse to continue this work." (Pravda, December 29, 1959).

Kirichenko, Belyayev Demoted to Protect Khrushchev

Belyayev's treatment at the hands of the Central Committee also shows an extraordinary degree of inconsistency. On December 19, 1959, the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of the USSR congratulated the Kazakhstan Party Central Committee on their successful conclusion of the agricultural year. But on December 25, 1959, the Kazakhstan Party Central Committee and Belyayev personally were subjected to severe criticism. On the same day, however, Belyayev was awarded the medal "For Valiant Labor." Finally, on January 19, 1960, he was removed from his post as Kazakhstan Party First Secretary and appointed Secretary of the Stavropol Krai Party Committee.

Having thrown the blame for the failure of his own policy onto Belyayev while at the same time giving way on the question of raising material incentives for kolkhoz members, Khrushchev is now trying to save himself by sacrificing yet another victim—Kirichenko—who was, perhaps, his closest protege. Apparently, Khrushchev here too was obliged to yield to pressure exerted by a group within the Central Committee which does not agree with his policy and is intent upon limiting his freedom of action as leader of the Party and the country by depriving him of the immediate assistance and support of his closest adherents.

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These transfers from higher positions to lower do not, however, involve the same consequences for those involved as were customary under Stalin, since Kirichenko and Belyayev, and Ionas Kalberzin, former Secretary of the Party Central Committee of Latvia, who was deprived of his post last year for "nationalist deviations," still retain their places in the Presidium of the All-Union Party Central Committee and appear alongside Khrushchev at various ceremonial functions.

These developments cannot but discredit Khrushchev, the Presidium, and the Central Committee as a whole, in the eyes of the entire Soviet population and also of Communist parties abroad.

The most important among measures intended to restore the prestige of Khrushchev and the Central Committee Presidium, is the Supreme Soviet's decision of January 15, 1960, to reduce the country's armed forces. This decision has provided fruitful material for Soviet propaganda on the eve of the four great powers' summit conference. The Soviet leadership is also keenly interested in the consequent release of labor and materials to fulfil the goals of the Seven-Year Plan and to aid in extending Soviet economic aid to the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, a program which is of great political importance to the Soviet regime. The Soviet press, however, is stressing that these newly-released resources will be used exclusively for the welfare of the Soviet people, to ensure that the country shall enjoy "abundance" as soon as possible:

As a result of the new reduction in the armed forces, our people, our country will make an appreciable economy. The Soviet government is directing a considerable portion of the resources saved to the further improvement of the welfare of the Soviet people (Pravda, January 20, 1960).

On January 20, 1960, the Soviet press published the resolution of the Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of the USSR on "Measures for the Further Improvement of Medical Services and Health Protection." A desire to impress the general public is all too obvious in the text of this decision, which virtually amounts to an order to abolish diphtheria, tularemia, poliomyelitis, malaria, uncinariasis, trachoma, etc., to "reveal" the causes of cancer and other malignant tumors, and to set up elaborate measures for their prevention and effective cure.

Naturally, measures which hold out such hopeful prospects as these are no more the result of any concern by Khrushchev and his colleagues for the general welfare than is Khrushchev's restraint towards his rivals the result of his goodness of heart-- they are the result of conflicts within the Central Committee which no group or individual is powerful enough to sweep away.

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Khrushchev has thus far succeeded in negotiating the Scylla and Charybdis of Central Committee internal politics--the balance between theory and practice. While the ultimate victory of World Communism is axiomatic for him, he nevertheless takes a pragmatic approach to the problems immediately confronting him. Even so, the measures which have just been discussed are little more than palliatives, and it is already possible to foresee some of the practical difficulties they are likely to entail.

Military Reductions Now Embarassing Soviets

For example, the law on the curtailment of the armed forces, at first a fruitful source of effective propaganda both at home and abroad, is now becoming a cause for anxiety. Neither the Soviet press nor Soviet military leaders are attempting to disguise the great difficulties which may arise for the demobilized men, especially the 250,000 officers concerned and their families: Minister of Defense of the USSR Marshal Rodion S. Malinovsky admitted that "the release of over 250,000 officers will be accompanied by certain difficulties" (Krasnaya Zvezda, Red Star, January 20, 1960).^{*} According to Sovetsky Flot (January 23, 1960), "the forthcoming curtailment of the fleet and the resulting changes in place of residence, the break-up of a settled way of life, the change of profession, will affect not only many officers but also the members of their families." On January 19, Krasnaya Zvezda, which is published by the Ministry of Defense, observed: "Not all comrades have reached pensionable age. Take, for example, Major Meshkov. He's a respected man in his unit, and he knows his job. But he is no longer young. He has a family, and still has time to serve. There are other officers like him." Marshal Malinovsky, in his speech cited above, appealed to the patriotism and Communist loyalty of the men affected and asked them to

show proper understanding of and a correct attitude toward the circumstances that have arisen.

It is hardly fitting for Soviet citizens-Soviet officers, Communists and Komsomol members--to be disheartened by the necessity of changing their profession or because they have to leave the ranks of the Army before they have served the length of time laid down as qualification for a pension. (Krasnaya Zvezda, January 20, 1960).

Malinovsky also admitted that the leading positions in the country's economic administration and governmental machine were mostly occupied by "worthy Soviet citizens" and that they should not be removed to make room for officers. According to the decree of the Party Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers published on January 26, 1960, which deals with the resettlement of men dismissed from the armed forces, most of these men will go to the new "construction sites" and the virgin lands in the North, the Urals, Siberia, the Far East and Kazakhstan. That their reaction to these developments will not always be a positive one can easily be imagined.

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Ed.: Red Star and Sovetsky Flot are Soviet Army and Navy daily papers.

The prospects for an appreciable improvement in living standards for the Soviet population are also none too bright. In an article on the second year of the Seven-Year Plan, Kommunist (1960, No. 1) gave figures for the projected increase in output of food products and consumer goods during 1960. By the end of this year, there should be 0.3 hen's eggs, 30.1 grams of fish, 123 grams of meat, and the equivalent in milk and dairy products of 0.75 kliters of milk per head of the population per day. According to the resolution of the Party Central Committee and Council of Ministers of the USSR, measures to increase the output and improve the quality of food products made from potatoes, corn, vegetables, fruit and grapes and to extend trade in these products (published in Pravda on January 27, 1960), corn, hitherto cultivated in the USSR only as fodder, is now, together with potatoes, to play an important part in feeding the Soviet population. The resolution announced that there is to be a considerable increase in the range of food products made from corn, including various types of flour. Another requirement is that arrangements be made on a wide scale to gather and sell to the state wild berries, fruit and mushrooms, using labor drawn from the kolkhozes and the rural population in general.

Central Committee Conflicts Persist

After the unpleasant and evidently unforeseen events at the December 1959, Plenum of the Central Committee, Khrushchev's position would now appear to have become somewhat more stable. At the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet held on January 14-15, 1960, all the speakers mentioned his outstanding services in various spheres of politics. It is impossible, however, not to notice a certain duality in the attitude taken toward Khrushchev and his policies. Even the "Stalinists," who are far from wholehearted supporters of Khrushchev and his policies, cannot help recognizing that the future of the Communist regime and the growing tendency in various strata of Soviet society to react against this regime make a one-man dictatorship absolutely essential for the regime's survival. Accordingly, while attempting to curb Khrushchev's inclination to make unorthodox experiments, the majority of the Central Committee's members are obliged to support him as the sole leader of both Party and government.

On the other hand, the attempt to justify Khrushchev's policy of cultivating the virgin lands by presenting false statistics, coupled with the condemnation of his agricultural policy at the December 1959 Plenum and his unexpected resort to a defensive tactic of blaming Belyayev and demoting Kirichenko--all this clearly suggests that there are conflicting forces within the Party Central Committee.

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